



**North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
Division of Public Health**

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Date: 16 OCT 2014  
To: N.C. Local Health Directors, Hospitals, and Funeral Home Directors  
From: Megan Davies, MD, State Epidemiologist  
Deborah Radisch, MD, MPH, Chief Medical Examiner  
Subject: Guidance for Safe Handling of Human Remains of Ebola Patients in NC Hospitals and Mortuaries

This memo provides guidance on the safe handling of human remains that may contain the Ebola virus for use by personnel who perform postmortem care in North Carolina (NC) hospitals and mortuaries.

The Ebola virus can be transmitted in postmortem care settings. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Guidance for Safe Handling of Human Remains of Ebola Patients in U.S. Hospitals and Mortuaries is found at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/guidance-safe-handling-human-remains-ebola-patients-us-hospitals-mortuaries.html>. By authority of 10A NCAC 41A.0201, the CDC's Guidance and other guidelines and recommended actions are incorporated by reference as NC law.

Please review this CDC Guidance for information on the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), postmortem preparation, mortuary care, disposition of remains, and transportation of the remains. In summary, CDC's Guidance states that PPE must be worn by postmortem care personnel prior to contact with the body, the body should be wrapped in a plastic shroud and placed in 2 leak-proof plastic body bags (not less than 150 um thick) before being transported, transportation minimized, the body may not be removed from the bags for embalming, and the remains cremated or buried promptly in a hermetically sealed casket. A hermetically sealed casket containing remains may be present at services so long as the burial takes place without delay. No PPE is needed when handling the cremated remains or the hermetically sealed closed casket. Transportation of remains that are not cremated should be kept to a minimum.

Funeral homes should make final arrangements in coordination and collaboration with Local Health Departments.

Situations may occur which complicate disposition of remains:

- A body may be unidentified at the time of death.
  - In the situation of an unidentified body, Medical Examiner jurisdiction will be invoked. The Medical Examiner will attempt to make identification where possible, for example, by the use of radiographs made prior to death, but without assuming additional risk. As such, once remains are enclosed in accordance with the Guidance, the enclosure will not be violated for photography or specimen collection for identification purposes. Radiography of remains in body bags in accordance with CDC guidelines may be performed.
- There may be no next of kin known at the time of death, or the next of kin may be unable to pay for cremation or hermetically sealed casket burial.
- Disposition of remains where no next of kin is known or where the family cannot pay will be cremation and should be made in accordance with the CDC Guidance. Local Health Departments should be notified and ensure that remains are handled correctly.

For additional information please contact the NC Division of Public Health at 919-733-3419.

Cc: North Carolina EMS providers

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